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DEAR MAHARAJAS, PRABHUS, AND DIDIS,
DANDAVAT PRANAMA. ALL GLORIES TO SRI GURU AND GAURANGA.

PLEASE, PLEASE FORGIVE ME. I ACCIDENTLY SENT A ROUGH DRAFT OF THIS LECTURE EARLIER TODAY. HERE IS THE FINAL VERSION. PLEASE READ THIS ONE INSTEAD, AND AGAIN, PLEASE EXCUSE ME, AND PLEASE BLESS ME.

THERE IS ONE BENEFIT YOU CAN GET FROM READING THE ROUGH DRAFT, OF COURSE, AND THAT IS: YOU CAN SEE THAT WE HAVE A CHECKS AND BALANCE SYSTEM IN PLACE FOR YOU.

YOUR ASPIRING SERVANT, VASANTI DASI

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

A SURPRISE DEFINITION of BHAKTI AND SADHU-SANGA

Los Angeles, California: May 11, 2003

Yesterday we glorified bhakti, and I told you that I want you to know what is real bhakti. To that end I will explain Srila Rupa Gosvami's description of the stages of bhakti – from the beginning.

adau sraddha tatah sadhu-
sango 'tha bhajana-kriya
tato 'nartha-nivrttih syat
tato nistha rucis tatah

athasaktis tato bhavas
tatah premabhyudancati
sadhakanam ayam premnah
pradurbhave bhavet kramah

["In the beginning one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization. This will bring one to the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated. In the next stage one becomes initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service. By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes free from all material attachment, attains steadiness in self-realization, and acquires a taste for hearing about the Absolute Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. This taste leads one further forward to attachment for Krsna consciousness, which is matured in bhava, or the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God. Real love for God is called prema, the

highest perfectional stage of life. In the prema stage there is constant engagement in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. So, by the slow process of devotional service, under the guidance of the bona fide spiritual master, one can attain the highest stage, being freed from all material attachment, from the fearfulness of one's individual spiritual personality, and from the frustrations that result in voidist philosophy. Then one can ultimately attain to the abode of the Supreme Lord." (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.4.15-16)]

What is sraddha, how does it begin, and what are its fruits? Sraddha, which means the tendency to serve Krsna, is the actual root or seed of all bhakti. We discussed that sraddha is of two kinds: worldly sraddha* [see endnote 1] and transcendental sraddha. Transcendental sraddha is also of two kinds – regulative and spontaneous* [see endnote 2]. Spontaneous sraddha is transcendental, and it comes by hearing the sweet pastimes of Krsna. By this hearing greed will come, and that is called lobhamayi-sraddha. This is the best kind; but what causes it to manifest in the heart of a devotee? It appears only by the mercy of Krsna, the Vaisnavas and Gurudeva. Moreover, Krsna's mercy comes through the mercy of the pure Vaisnavas.

What is Vaisnava-sanga or sadhu-sanga? You should know what is real association with a sadhu or saintly devotee. Sanga in short means association. San-ga – it is a Sanskrit word and it denotes samyak rupena gamanam; meaning to follow and serve one's Guru in all respects. This is also stated in the Bhagavad-Gita (4.34):

tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya
upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattva-darsinah

["Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth."]

You will have to seek out a high class of association – qualified Vaisnava devotees – and offer obeisances to them, thinking, "I must obey, serve and please them in all respects." Tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya. Three things are mentioned here by Krsna. First, pranipatena – surrender yourself, thinking, "I must obey." Secondly, pariprasnena – you will have to very humbly ask questions, and the Vaisnavas saints will explain and reconcile everything for you. Thirdly, sevaya – you will have to serve with a mood to please them. Without these three, you cannot have bhakti. This is stated throughout the scriptures, and there are so many examples.

`sadhu-sanga', `sadhu-sanga' – sarva-sastre kaya
lava-matra sadhu-sange sarva-siddhi haya

["The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment's association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success." (Caitanya-Caritamrta, Madhya-lila 22.54)]

Without sadhu-sanga you cannot advance in Krsna consciousness. If you are trying to perform bhakti by yourself, by your intelligence, the result will be karma (material fruitive activity) – not bhakti.

There are many kinds of bhakti, such as svarupa-siddha bhakti, sanga-siddha bhakti and aropa-siddha bhakti.* [see endnote 3] Among them, only svarupa-siddha bhakti is pure. Sanga-siddha bhakti and aropa-siddha bhakti cannot give pure bhakti in thousands and millions of births. They are called worldly bhakti, or bhakti mixed with karma and jnana. We should avoid them and try to properly understand svarupa-siddha bhakti.

We have explained nine kinds of bhakti, then five, then three, then one – harinama-sankirtana. Is visrambhena guroh seva (intimate service to guru), or guru-seva, in the list of these nine, five, three or one? It is in the list of 64, but where is this mentioned in the nine prominent kinds of bhakti? We will have to think about this point, because without accepting a Guru and performing visrambha guru-seva, you cannot know what is bhakti and who is Krsna. First you must know that to serve Guru is pure bhakti, or svarupa-siddha bhakti. We should consider this.

You should also know the meaning of sanga-siddha bhakti. For example, there are so many devotees and pure devotees here in this hall, and it may be that many here have no bhakti at all. They have come to begin their bhakti. They want it, but they do not yet understand and practice bhakti. Outsiders will see us all, and later they will tell others, "A group of devotees came here." These outsiders cannot differentiate between devotees and non-devotees, so even if a person is against bhakti, because he is sitting amongst the devotees, he will also be called a devotee. If he will sit anywhere else, however, outside the company of devotees, he will not be considered a devotee. This is called sanga-siddha.

If you are doing anything, you must do it to please Krsna. For example, if you are sweeping the temple, that activity is not mentioned in the nine or five or three limbs of bhakti. This is pure bhakti, svarupa-siddha bhakti – though it has not been written.

laukiki vaidiki vapi ya kriya kriyate mune
hari-sevanukulaiva sa karya bhaktim icchata

["A devotee may act as an ordinary human being or as a strict follower of Vedic injunctions. In either case, everything he does is favorable for the advancement of devotional service because he is in Krsna consciousness." (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.200)]

[Madhava Maharaja:] Srila Rupa Gosvami has explained this verse in his Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu. Laukiki means "what you are doing in this material world to maintain your life and social relationships. This is laukiki karma or worldly work. Vaidhiki means "that which is discussed in the Vedas". We have heard from Srila Gurudeva that Lord Ramacandra was in exile for 14 years, and during that time he went to Agastya Rsi's asrama. While he was there, he saw an airplane descending from a heavenly planet. A

person got out from the airplane, went to a bank of a pond, and saw a dead body there. He then cut some flesh of the dead body and ate it. Seeing this, Lord Ramacandra asked Agastya Rsi, "What is that?" Agastya Rsi told him that if someone does not respect or serve his parents, then even if he goes to a heavenly planet in his next birth, he cannot drink the nectar there. Rather, he will have to come down to this planet and eat the flesh from his own dead body. Hearing this Ramacandra thought, "It is mentioned in the Vedas that if one does not serve and respect his parents, he will have to eat his own flesh. I must respect the Vedas." This is vaidhiki karma, activity performed with reference to the Vedas, in relation to social life. We must obey the injunctions of the Vedas.

"Ya kriya kriyate mune" – mune means sage. If that karma or service is hari-sevanukulya – favorable to hari-seva – then it is bhakti. If it is not favorable to hari-seva, it is not bhakti.

There are two types of hari: visaya and asraya. Who is visaya? Bhagavan, or Krsna.

aisvarya-sya samagrasya
virya-sya yasa-sah sriyah
jnana-vairagyayos caiva
sannam bhagam itingana

["Bhagavan is He who possesses six opulences in full: all riches, all strength, all influence, all wisdom, all beauty, all renunciation." (Visnu Purana 6.5.47)]

Krsna has six qualities. Six opulences are found to reside in visaya-bhagavan, Krsna, and the qualities of asraya-bhagavan, His devotee, are explained in the following verse:

sarva maha-guna-gana vaisnava-sarire
krsna-bhakte krsnera guna sakali sancare

["A Vaisnava is one who has developed all good transcendental qualities. All the good qualities of Krsna gradually develop in His devotee. (Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya-lila 22.75)]

So there are two types of Hari. If one's service is favorable for the two types of Hari, then it will be bhakti; otherwise not.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] Once, Krsna and His friends entered the house of a gopi and began to steal butter. Krsna was caught red handed by that gopi and brought to Mother Yasoda. Mother Yasoda became very angry and worried, thinking, "If Krsna is so naughty at this young age, what will happen when He gets older? He may become a dacoit or thief, so I must punish Him for His own welfare. She took a stick, bound Him, and then began to chastise Him thus: "Shall I beat you?" Krsna began to weep bitterly, "Mother, Mother, Mother! Save me." What is this? Is making Krsna cry bhakti, or not? Is this activity one of the sixty four limbs of bhakti? This is actually bhakti; it is favorable for Krsna. It has been done for Krsna's benefit, so that He will be happy for His entire

life. Mother Yasoda was thinking, "He should develop good character and not grow up to be a thief." Therefore, an activity may appear externally not to be bhakti, but if it is done for the pleasure of Krsna and performed with a favorable mood, it is bhakti.

Playing His human-like pastimes, Krsna once did something wrong to Radhika. Lalita, Visakha, and all the gopis forcibly "arrested" Him for this, took Him to the Queen of Vraja, and ordered Him, "You should ask forgiveness and offer sastang pranama (full obeisances with all eight limbs of the body)." He was bound to do so, because there were many gopis and He was alone. Radhika then placed Her lotus feet on the head of Krsna and exclaimed "Oh, I excuse you." What is this? This is not mentioned in the sixty four types of bhakti, yet it is the highest class of bhakti because by this act Krsna became so happy. We should understand these principles, and then bhakti may come to us. Otherwise, we cannot understand simply by ordinary intelligence, and bhakti will not manifest.

[Sripad Padmanabha Maharaja:] You were asking in what category was this action of Srimati Radharani – putting Her lotus feet on Krsna's lotus head. So I'm wondering, can we not include that in the category of atma-nivedanam (full self-surrender)? Atma-nivedanam is one of the nine limbs of bhakti, so if a bhakta has given his full atma (soul) to Krsna, then any action he does is pure bhakti. Can it not be included, then, in the category of atma-nivedanam?

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] There is no question of atma-nivedanam in this instance. There is no question of Srimati Radhika surrendering to Krsna. Krsna may surrender to Radhika; why should She surrender to Krsna? [devotees cheer loudly]

Without sadhu-sanga, bhakti cannot develop. Bhakti comes from sadhu-sanga, but what is sadhu-sanga?

Srla Sanatana Gosvami has written in the Brhad-bhagavatamrta about a boy named Gopa-kumara, who was born in a brahmana family in Govardhana. He had engaged in a great deal of devotional activities in his past lives. To help him, Srimati Radhika sent Her associate in the form of a Guru, who thus descended to introduce him to the teachings of bhakti, starting from the beginning. That Guru gave him the gopal-mantra, but before He could explain the meaning of the mantra, He fainted in ecstasy and then disappeared. Nevertheless, the boy began to chant the mantra with great faith. By doing so, all his desires for worldly things were quickly and amazingly dispelled. He went to Puri to perform bhakti, and there he saw that his Guru was waiting for him on the bank of the ocean. But again, as his Guru began was explaining something about the mantra, He fainted and then disappeared, and He could not be found anywhere. Thus, his Gurudeva was helping him to experience the mood of separation. In the end, his Guru explained to him about sakhya-rasa, vatsalya-rasa and madhurya-rasa, the mood of Krsna as one's beloved. Gopa-kumara became self-realized and later shared his realization with his disciple, Jana Sarma. His disciple learned everything and became expert in all tattvas (established philosophic truths) by his mercy, but there was something lacking. He could not weep for Krsna and he had no realization.

You can hear these topics, but can you loudly weep for Krsna like Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Srila Rupa Gosvami and others? Only by the mercy of your Gurudeva can you weep – and only if your Gurudeva is bona fide and realized. The boy wanted to weep and become a servant of Krsna, but he could not. Then the Guru, Gopa-kumara, who was now also sent by Radhika, placed his hand on his young disciple's head and blessed him to realize all the subject matters spoken by him – to realize transcendental moods. The disciple at once began to weep loudly, and to sing, and his heart melted. He suddenly disappeared from that place, appeared in Goloka Vrndavana, and there he saw Krsna herding the cows, singing, and playing on His flute. He ran to Krsna, overjoyed. They both fainted, and after that Krsna embraced him. The Guru must be expert and realized, and then he can give you the blessing of full transcendental realization – simply by placing his hand on your head. This is really sadhu-sanga.

Gaura Premanande

[Endnote 1: "There are two kinds of sraddha: one is worldly sraddha, worldly faith, and the second is transcendental faith. Worldly sraddha is always shaky and very weak. On the other hand, if one has transcendental sraddha, like Haridasa Thakura, he will think, 'Even if you cut me into thousands of pieces, I will not give up my chanting and my worship.'" (Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, July 6 2002, France)]

(Worldly faith may also apply to faith in material relations, and in that case transcendental faith will apply to faith in transcendental personalities, like Guru, sadhu, and sastra.)

(The following quotes were taken from Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindu)

[Endnote 2: Paramarthika-sraddha (transcendental faith) is of two kinds: 1) sastrartha avadharanamayi-sraddha - faith which brings about engagement in the path of bhakti inspired by the governing principles of scripture, and 2) bhagavat-lila-madhurya-lobbhamayi-sraddha - faith which brings about engagement in bhakti due to intense longing, arisen out of some extreme good fortune by hearing the sweet pastimes of Krsna."]

[Endnote 3: Three Types of Bhakti

One should also remember that bhakti is of three types: svarupa siddha (those endeavors which are purely constituted of uttama-bhakti), sanga-siddha (those endeavors which are associated with or favorable to the development of bhakti but not of themselves purely composed of bhakti), and aropa-siddha (those activities which although not consisting of pure bhakti, are designated as bhakti due to their being offered to the Supreme Lord).

Aropa-siddha-bhakti: Endeavors indirectly attributed with the quality of bhakti. Endeavors which by nature are not purely constituted of bhakti – that is, anukulya-krsnanusilana – and in which the performer, in order to fulfill his own purpose, offers his activities and their results to the Lord. This is called aropa-siddha-bhakti. In other words,

because his activities are assigned (aropa) to the Supreme Lord, bhakti is attributed (aropita) to them.

Comment

That bhakti in which there is a mixture of karma or desires for material enjoyment is called sakama-bhakti or saguna-bhakti. Without the assistance of bhakti, karma cannot yield any fruit. Knowing this, many persons offer their prescribed duties for the satisfaction of the Lord, in order that He might fulfill their extraneous desires. The activities of such persons are not svarupa-siddha-bhakti. Nonetheless, because they offer the fruit of their activity to the Lord, it is considered as a type of bhakti. Although their activities are offered for the satisfaction of the Lord, their motivation is that by pleasing Him, He may fulfill their extraneous desires. In this case their activities are attributed with the sense of bhakti. Therefore, such endeavors are known as aropa-siddha-bhakti.

Sanga-siddha-bhakti: Endeavors associated with or favorable to the cultivation of Bhakti. There are other endeavors which, although not purely constituted of bhakti, anukulya-krsnanusilana, acquire a likeness to bhakti due to their being established as assistants to bhakti. Such endeavors are known as sanga-siddha-bhakti. An example of this is found in Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.3. 23-25) in the statement of Sri Prabuddha Muni to Maharaja Nimi:

"One should cultivate compassion towards others, friendliness, offering respect to others, cleanliness, austerity, tolerance, silence, study of the Vedas, simplicity, celibacy, non-violence, and so on. One should consider heat and cold, happiness and distress to be the same. One should perceive the presence of the Lord everywhere. One should live in a secluded place, renounce family attachments and remain satisfied with gain which comes of its own accord."

Even though the behavior or practices described in this verse are not by nature purely constituted of bhakti, they are assistants to bhakti. Thus they are considered to be like associates or of bhakti. If bhagavad-bhakti is removed from the twenty-six qualities mentioned, then Bhagavan has no direct relationship with the remaining qualities such as compassion, friendliness, tolerance, austerity, and so on. Only when these items exist as assistants to or associates of bhakti is their likeness to bhakti affected. Therefore, they are known as sanga-siddha-bhakti.

Svarupa-siddha-bhakti: Endeavors purely constituted of uttama-bhakti

All favorable endeavors (cesta) such as sravana, kirtana, smarana, and so on, as well as the manifestation of the spiritual sentiments which occur beginning from the stage of bhava, which are completely devoid of all desires separate from Sri Krsna and which are freed from the coverings of jnana and karma are known as svarupa-siddha-bhakti. In other words all endeavors of the body, words and mind which are related to Sri Krsna and which are performed exclusively and directly for His pleasure without any interruption are known as svarupa-siddha-bhakti.

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Therefore in the conversation between Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Raya Ramananda, found in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, both aropa-siddha and sanga-siddha-bhakti have been described as external. (Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindhu 17-19)]

Editorial advisors: Pujoyapad Madhava Maharaja and Sripad Brajanatha dasa

Transcriber: Janaki dasi

Editor: Janardana dasa

Editorial assistant: Syamarani dasi

Typists: Bimala dasi, Anita dasi and Vasanti dasi

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